

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

May 21, 1970


MEMORANDUM FOR

DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: Participation in the COINS System

I understand that the existing experimental COINS network will be continued for another two years. This affords an opportunity to evaluate, among other things, the possible use of such a system to supply certain types of information to the White House.

I would appreciate it if arrangements could be made for the White House to participate in the system and to have a COINS terminal here.


Henry A. Kissinger

COMMENTS ON WHITE HOUSE REQUEST FOR COINS TERMINAL

The only useful and useable ingredient in the COINS system for those who are not interested in a case history of a Community cooperative enterprise is the data in the thirty or so files that have been made accessible to COINS users by the various participating agencies. These files, which are the real reason for COINS, have from the very outset been a bone of contention, and a source of continuing frustration to those most anxious to make COINS a useful Community resource.

Before examining the files themselves and the history which explains their presence in the system, it should be noted that in the past few years a considerable amount of experience in the use of interactive on-line systems has been amassed. The general consensus is that such systems seem to address the needs of, and find their greatest use by, the personal user with a small file. In practice this individual is either a computer programmer or an analyst who has learned to write programs. Though COINS is not now an interactive system, i.e., the user may only retrieve data, the evaluation of the use to date of interactive systems has implications for those who wish to use the COINS system.

When the Community was requested to implement the COINS system about four years ago, everyone acknowledged that COINS was a useless device without files. Unfortunately there were few files that satisfied the basic requirements:

(a) The file should be of interest to analysts outside the sponsoring agency or the file should provide a good data base to be used in an Experiment.

(b) The file must be in a machineable form and accessible by the sponsoring organization would use to respond to queries from COINS users.

(c) The file must fit the system, e.g., the records could not exceed a certain number of bits, the response to a query must not be too long, etc.

(The first requirement, i.e., that the file be useful to an analyst or that the file be useful in an Experiment was never resolved.) The agencies, having pledged themselves to place files in COINS, went to work with varying degrees of enthusiasm to keep their promises. DIA was by far the most successful - in terms of number of files - since a file targetted for the in-house DIA On-Line System (DIAOLS) - became a condidate for COINS as well. At any rate files were eventually placed on the COINS system.

These are ^r~~the~~ ^{at} present approximately 25 to 30 files in COINS. This number waxes and wanes as new files are added or deleted. A document issued by the COINS User Support Panel, dated 6 May 1970, which reported on the maintenance of COINS files as of 30 April 1970, listed 25 files. These are shown in the following table:

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* Though these files were updated 1 May 1970, they contain
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The data in this table is most informative. Note, for example, that the date of maintenance may not correspond to the date of the data in the file. In the case of FPP, FPN, and FPR the files contain information through CY 1969 as a result of the 1 May 1970 maintenance.

Of the 25 files reported, DIA has 18. These may be grouped as follows:

All COINS files are formatted.

This means that data extracted from the file as a result of a query does not show the relationship of people to places and events that is customary in an intelligence report. Moreover all files in COINS

cannot exceed TS/SI which leaves the analyst who uses the data to determine if other sources of intelligence should be researched.

In summary one can say that files in COINS should not be queried by the novice or the dilettante; the experienced, professional intelligence analyst stands a better chance of understanding the data and using it productively.



Chief, IHC Support Staff

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Distribution List

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U N I T E D S T A T E S I N T E L L I G E N C E B O A R D
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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: White House Request for Participation in the COINS System

REFERENCE: H.A. Kissinger memorandum dated 21 May 1970

COINS

- A. Started 1965/1966
- B. NSA Executive Agent, 31 May 1968
- C. COINS Purpose

1. Effort to link, electrically, information retrieval systems to provide access to shared data bases in each intelligence agency's system.

COINS Status

- A. Current Participants
 - 1. CIA
 - 2. DIA
 - 3. NSA
 - 4. State
 - 5. NIC
- B. Currently in Test & Analysis Phase
 - 1. Through FY-72
 - 2. Evaluation in progress
 - 3. Utility to intelligence analysts needs to be proved
 - 4. Alternative configurations need to be examined

C O N F I D E N T I A L

5. Currently experimental/operational in nature
- C. Complex technical/procedural problems exist which need to be resolved

1. Complexity in system use

COINS Data Bases

(Attach an annex showing a list of primary and secondary files. Provide brief definition of primary and secondary files.)

A. Quantity/Quality

1. Restricted by technical multi-level security problems
2. Varying degrees of completeness, detail, and timeliness
3. Need for more files of information responsive to the needs of intelligence analysts has been cited by COINS participants

Conclusions & Questions

A. Existing COINS configuration not the answer

B. Information currently in COINS available to White House in other forms (already analyzed) (e.g., telephone, special papers, CRITICS, and regular distribution)

1. What are the types of information the White House needs to have available on-line?

C. In what way can an on-line system better meet White House intelligence information requirements?